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THE BEAR

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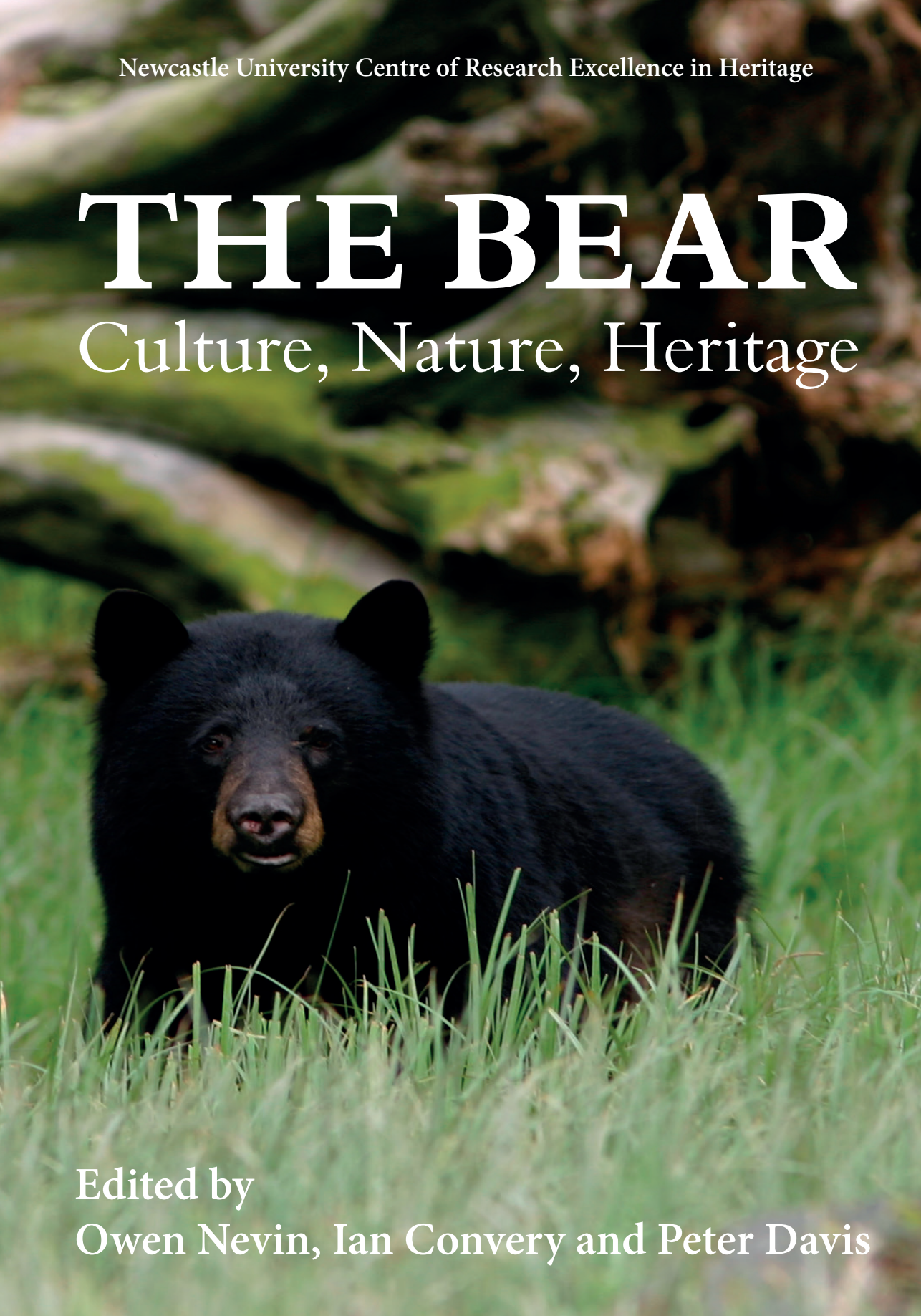

Edited by
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Bears, Wildmen, Yeti and Sasquatch

Jeff Meldrum

Humans have long held an affinity with bears, and a fascination for their superficial, but remarkable, similarity to people. This allure has even taken the form of worship, or *arctolatry*. Some have argued that the romantic notions of ancient bear cults and Paleolithic shrines are more the result of taphonomic processes and the imaginations of early discoverers (Wunn 2001). Wunn (2001, 457) concludes, 'Conceptions of cave bear worship during the early and middle Paleolithic period belong to the realm of legend.' Not all might agree, but in any case, in the more recent past, bear worship is manifest among ethnic groups across northern Eurasia, stretching from the Basques of the Pyrenees to the Ainu of Hokkaido. Intertwined with these practices is the frequent folk belief that humans descended from bears. For example, the ancient royal lines of Denmark and Sweden are declared to result from a cross between a woman and a bear (Magnus 1555). Indigenous peoples of North America also held the notion that bears and humans can interbreed. For example, the Haida of the Pacific coast of Alaska and Canada hold a tradition of a woman taken as a wife by a bear. The daughter of this pairing eventually returned to live with the Haida, and according to the legend, this primal bear-human goddess is the ancestor of all those entitled to wear the prestigious bear clan crest (Smith 1909).

Bears exhibit notable likenesses to humans in both anatomy and behaviour. Bears walk on plantigrade feet, they can stand upright, they nurse their young from paired pectoral mammae as do humans, they are omnivorous and intelligent, and they have colour vision. Medieval physicians recognized the similarity between bears and humans and, prior to knowledge of the great apes, considered the bear one of the animals most closely related to humans (Pastoureau 2011). Poet and environmental activist Gary Snyder (1990, 175) mused, 'After you take a bear's coat off, it looks just like a human.' In fact, as any hunter who has dressed a bear carcass can attest, the resemblance in musculoskeletal anatomy is so striking that some texts on forensic anthropology include specific references to bear skeletal anatomy in order to differentiate it from human remains. There was a case in rural Idaho involving the discovery of a decomposing carcass in a garbage bag that turned up in a drawn-down reservoir. Initial examination raised concern that it was perhaps the corpse of a missing person. Consultation with local anthropologists determined that it was actually a hunter's butchered bear remains (Meldrum, *pers comm*).

The Wildman

Bears have not been, however, the only anthropomorphic entities in the forests. In classical times, through the Middle Ages, the figure of the hair-covered Wildman – satyr, silvanus, woodwose and leshy – was also the denizen of the forests. Traditions likewise recount sexual encounters between these Wildmen and human females. From the 12th to the 16th centuries, the iconic Wildman

(and Green Man) was a popular figure adorning heraldic crests and standing vigil over cathedral portals. With the age of enlightenment, the prominent position of the Wildman eventually faded into the mists of mythology. Just as the mystical position of the bear was displaced by the rise of science and influence of Christianity, so it seems was the role of man's presumed wild and hairy, and sometimes lascivious, forest-dwelling alter ego.

By the 18th century, accounts by Western explorers and scientists renewed fascination with notions of exotic man-like creatures in the far-off frontiers in Africa and Asia. Linnaeus (1735) dubbed these the Anthropomorpha, or man-shaped creatures. Indeed, he recognized two types of humans, contrasting *Homo sapiens* – man the wise – with *Homo troglodytes* – the cave man (also known as *Homo sylvestris* – the forest man). This was not a cave man in the cartoon Alley Oop[1] sense, popular from the 1930s through to the 1970s. Linnaeus' troglodyte was envisioned as entirely hair-covered, nocturnal, devoid of speech or material culture. In its various depictions, the troglodyte was figured alongside the then poorly understood members of the Simia (the imitators), ie the monkeys and apes. These included recognizable, but indeed anthropomorphised after a stylised fashion, depictions of a modern baboon, chimpanzee and orangutan. In a later edition of *Systema Natura*, Linnaeus abandoned Anthropomorpha for the more exclusive Primates – humans, apes and monkeys, although now excluding the sloths. But the troglodyte never gained general acceptance as a real entity. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1779) dubbed it Linnaeus' 'Great Mistake', attributing it to confused descriptions mixing traits of humans and the orangutan. To natural theologians of the day, these man-shaped creatures, ape or Wildman, represented missing links in creation's Great Chain of Being. Rather than reviling them like many clerics of the times, as a mockery of humanity, as disparaging caricatures of man's creation in the similitude of God, they instead perceived them as completing the perfection of God's creation by bridging the apparent gap perceived between humanity and the animal kingdom.

The Yeti

Given these two strikingly anthropomorphic creatures – the bear and the Wildman – the potential for conflation is obvious. Such blurring is all too evident in the lore surrounding a modern 'Wildman' – the abominable snowman, or *yeti*. Indeed, the etymology of the various names for the *yeti* demonstrate this tendency for amalgamation – eg the Tibetan *Michê* translates as *man-bear*. In the Himalayas there are two recognized bear species: the Himalayan or Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus laniger*) [Syn: *Selanarctos thibetanus*] and the Himalayan brown bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*). The existence of a yet unrecognized hominoid remains in question; therefore many offer the bear as an explanation for anomalous Wildman encounters. Indeed, the *yeti* might have languished in the realms of legend were it not for the evidence of footprints. These seemed to attest to the physicality of the creature and none took on such an iconic quality as the footprint photographed close-up by mountaineers Eric Shipton and Michael Ward in 1951 (Ward 1997). There have been numerous interpretations offered to account for its unusual appearance (Meldrum 2018). Given the crispness of the outline, in particular the toes and the snow ridges between them, it is difficult to imagine much distortion by melting or sublimation, and even

[1] Alley Oop was a syndicated comic strip created by V T Hamlin. Its title character was a club-wielding caveman residing in the prehistoric kingdom of Moo, who offered a satirical look at suburban life in mid-20th century America.

more difficult to imagine inconsistent distortions manifested, but left unmentioned, along the trackway, which was observed for more than a mile. Since close-ups of only one footprint were taken, it cannot be determined whether this singular image is an accurate representation of the foot anatomy, or a depiction of artefacts unique to this particular print. Sceptics dismiss it as merely the overstep of a bear's fore and hind paws. They further generalise in their assumptions by explaining away all footprints attributed to the *yeti* as misidentified bear tracks (Taylor 2017; Messner 1998).

I personally researched and catalogued the photographic evidence of any and all footprints attributed to the *yeti*. Numerous published photos of footprints, and several unpublished or little-known photos, were identified. It became clear that the majority of '*yeti*' footprints were largely unintelligible due to melting and sublimation, and therefore *indeterminate*. Indeed, it was confirmed that a significant fraction of the minority were blatantly bear tracks, and only a very few footprints pointed to a potential hominoid trackmaker. I often pondered how it was that the Sherpas so adamantly identified obvious bear tracks as *yeti*. Were they so disingenuous that they would assert whatever they suspected the Western explorer wanted to hear? Or were they so naïve as to not apprehend the distinctions between a bear paw print and a hominoid footprint? An insight shared by an Indian author shed light on this question for me. For the Sherpa, the Western boundary between the physical and the spiritual is far less distinct, if even acknowledged. For them the *yeti* is the 'Spirit of the Mountain', capable of corporeal expression in any of a variety of forms: a pilgrim, a wildman, a bear (Lall 1988). Enigmatic tracks discovered on barren glaciers at high altitude must be the spoor of the *yeti* corporeal, even if from one's perspective it is merely a bear traversing a high snowy pass between forested valleys.

That numerous examples of tracks attributed to the *yeti* are in fact made by bears is a certainty, but is it justified to generalise that *all* '*yeti*' tracks are left by bears? It would seem not. Some described encounters and a very few documented footprints do point to a possible hominoid. Foremost among these rare examples are what should have displaced the Shipton-Ward footprint as the 'type specimens' of yeti footprints, ie those discovered by Edward Cronin and Jeff McNeeley in 1972, on a biological survey expedition in the Upper Barun Khola of Nepal (Cronin 1979; McNeeley *et al* 1973; McNeeley and Wachtel 1988). The tracks were pristine, laid down overnight with no opportunity for melting or sublimation in the sun. There was no issue of distortion, only a question of interpretation. The footprints extended for miles. They reportedly maintained a bipedal gait throughout – no evidence of the distinct appearance of fore paws vs hind paws, as in a quadrupedal bear trackway, even when ascending a steep incline through deep snow. Not only were multiple photographs taken of the prints, but a plaster cast was made and photographed as well. Unfortunately, the cast was seized by customs agents at the Nepalese border and is now unaccounted for. Using the combined photos of the cast and footprints, I undertook an exercise to build up a model in clay of the inferred foot responsible for that print. The result portrays what appears to be the footprint of a hominoid – not a bear (Meldrum 2018).

Known Sympatry of Bears and Hominoids

While Africa has its anthropomorpha in the form of the chimpanzees (Bantu – *mockman*) and gorillas (Carthigian Hanno – tribe of hairy women), there are no sympatric bears to conflate visual or trace encounters. The only African bear is found in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco (*Ursus arctos crowtheri*). On the other hand – or foot – the islands of Borneo and Sumatra harbour

the orangutan (Austronesian – *man of the woods*), as well as two subspecies of the Malayan sun bear. *Helarctos malayanus malayanus* inhabits Asian mainland and Sumatra; *H. m. euryspilus* occurs only on the island of Borneo. The specialised adaptations of the foot of the highly arboreal *quadrumanus* orangutan leaves little room for confusion with bear tracks, on those rare occasions it ventures to the ground. But southeast Asia reportedly harbours a diminutive wildman, known by various names, including the now popularised *orang pendek*. This hairy biped is said to leave small broad humanoid footprints with narrow heels, which has raised the potential for conflation with sightings and footprints of standing sun bears (Forth 2008).

The Sasquatch

The indigenous peoples of the Pacific northwest of North America are certainly familiar with bears. Native to North America are the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*), the grizzly or brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), and in the remote northern Arctic, the polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*). As elsewhere, bears hold a significant position in the natural and cultural landscape of these tribal peoples. They too have a distinct notion of a Wildman in their lore. In the Pacific northwest, these hominoid entities are portrayed prominently in costume, on totem poles, and as clan crests. Various tribes have their own names for them, eg '*sokqueatl*,' '*soss-q'tal*' or '*sesqac*', most appellations translating roughly as 'Wildman of the woods'. An anglicised form of these variant names was popularised by reservation schoolteacher and writer J W Burns, who attributes the term '*sasquatch*' to Charlie Victor, an old hunter from the Skwah Reserve near Chilliwack, British Columbia. (Burns 1929). Early European explorers and settlers to North America occasionally reported encounters with wildmen, perhaps influenced by traditions from the Old World. But the *sasquatch* and Bigfoot, as it came to be called in the United States after the late 1950s, was described as a giant ape, from 7–10ft tall, leaving 16in. footprints (Genzoli 1958). Could such a creature, a large relict hominoid, even sustain itself in the montane forest ecosystem of western North America?

Based on native traditional stories and contemporary eyewitness observations, *sasquatch* seem to have a catholic diet, and therefore would occupy the niche of a generalised omnivore. Bears, as well as humans, also share an omnivorous diet. Some sceptical wildlife biologists object to the premise of a *sasquatch* since a large mammalian species – namely bears – already occupies the omnivore niche. However, 'large omnivore' is a broad-brush characterisation of a dietary niche, which hardly justifies invoking the principle of competitive exclusion – ie that only one species can occupy a single niche. There would seem to be ample evidence of niche partitioning and possibly character displacement in terms of intelligence, social organisation and population density, daily activity patterns, masticatory adaptations and digestive physiology, and locomotor adaptations attributed to bears and *sasquatch* respectively. For example, bears have evolved from a carnivore ancestor that possessed a protruding snout, sporting large canines, carnassial premolars and molars, and a relatively short and simple digestive tract. *Sasquatch*, being a hominoid primate, would likely have evolved from a largely frugivore/folivore ancestor, with a flatter lower face, thick enamelled and enlarged premolars and molars, shorter canines, long complex digestive tract with slow passage and hindgut fermentation aiding in digestion and detoxification of plant secondary compounds. The adaptations derived in the bear and *sasquatch* respectively would constitute two distinct ways to be a large omnivore (Meldrum and Mionczynski 2007).

Bigfoot Lookalikes?

Given this broadly convergent, yet distinct evolution, it would seem that if a black bear can make a living in a given habitat with diverse available resources, then very likely a *sasquatch* could as well. Indeed, there is much overlap in the distribution of substantiated reports of *sasquatch* and the known range of black bears. This was dramatically demonstrated by Lozier *et al* (2009). To draw attention to their concern over indiscriminate application of ecological niche modelling (ENM) software to predict species distributions, the authors ran a test case using *ostensibly* 'suspect' *sasquatch* data. The results showed remarkable overlap between resulting distributions of *sasquatch* and black bear. Their conclusion was, 'Thus, the two "species" do not demonstrate significant niche differentiation with respect to the selected bioclimatic variables. Although it is possible that *sasquatch* and *U. americanus* share such remarkably similar bioclimatic requirements, we nonetheless suspect that many Bigfoot sightings are, in fact, of black bears' (Lozier *et al* 2009, 1626). This is the argument, albeit qualified, employed by some ideological sceptics. Joe Nickell (2013), writing for *Skeptical Inquirer*, in a piece titled 'Bigfoot Lookalikes', offered this, together with a blatantly back-handed caveat, 'Let it be understood that I am in no way saying that all Sasquatch/Bigfoot sightings involve bears. After all, some are surely other misidentifications or hoaxes involving people in furry suits.' Nickell concludes that standing bears are the best lookalike for the upright hairy man-beasts called Bigfoot. As will be seen, any similarity is largely limited to upright posture, hairiness and colour, in spite of the contrived comparisons Nickell offers (Fig 5.1).

Although Lozier *et al* (2009) appeared to have undertaken this exercise rather tongue-in-cheek, in reality all three authors were actually quite interested in the *sasquatch* phenomenon and wanted to more closely examine these data with some ecological niche modelling (ENM) in order to see what conclusions could be reached. One of the paper's authors, Peter Aniello, who

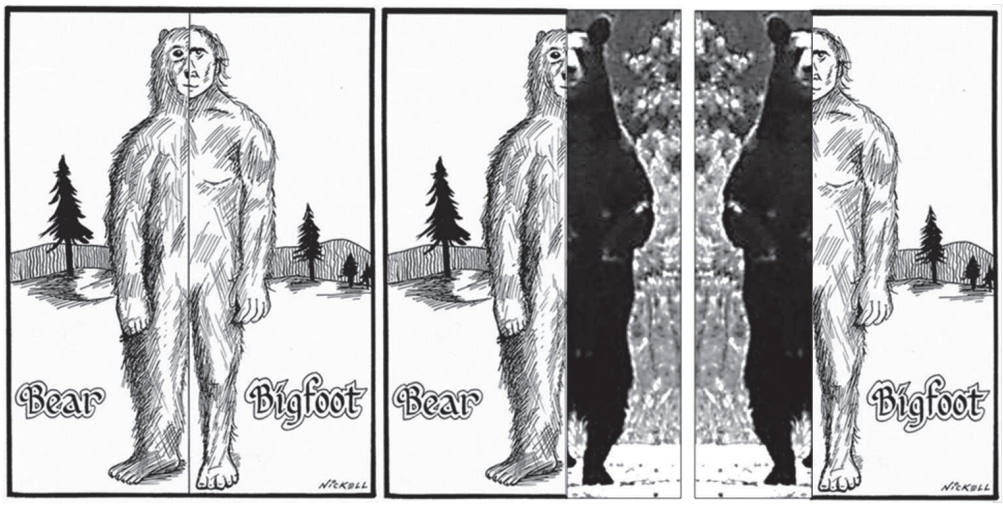

Figure 5.1. (Left) Upright bear offered as a Bigfoot Lookalike by Nickell (2013). (Center) Comparison of Nickell's bear figure alongside an actual upright black bear, highlighting the inaccuracies of the figured bear anatomy. (Right) Real bear contrasted with Nickell's Bigfoot sketch.

has published in and serves on the editorial board of the *Relict Hominoid Inquiry*[2], said, 'The results were actually remarkably consistent, both using the full [Bigfoot] dataset and just a subset for which footprint observations were available, and with points withheld to be used as check points. In fact, the ENM came out exactly how you would expect an ENM to look for a real animal fitting the description of a Bigfoot. But to get this published in the *Journal of Biogeography*, (and, I'm sure Jeff L. [Lozier] and Bill [Hickerson] were thinking, to avoid the negative experiences you (Jeff M. [Meldrum]) have gone through in academia!), the paper had to be framed as "look how great the ENM can look even if you're using suspect data"' (Aniello, *pers comm*). This is an informative caveat, and one revealing of the inherent bias against scholarly discussions of the evidence for *sasquatch*, and the tendency to offer instead the simplistic explanation that all *sasquatch* encounters are merely bear misidentifications.

The chance of mistaking a bear sighting for a *sasquatch* is conceivable, but unlikely for a knowledgeable experienced observer under favourable conditions. In fact, quite the opposite might be more likely the case. The initial reaction of many disinterested eyewitnesses to a possible *sasquatch* sighting is to rationalise what they have seen, as simply a bear. Their inclination is to account for their experience within a familiar framework – 'It was dark and hairy and upright, so it must have been a standing bear.' However, any resemblance ends there. Bears rarely walk for more than a few steps in an upright posture before dropping again to all fours. Their bipedal gait is usually halting and awkward on relatively short hindlimbs. Their forelimbs do not swing alternately with each step, but instead are held out forward in front of the body, constrained by the sloping shoulder anatomy of a quadruped, lacking a clavicle.

Bears have characteristic physical features that distinguish them from the typical description of *sasquatch*. Notable 'field marks' aid in the reliable identification of wildlife species. Field marks for bears include: prominent ears atop their heads, long snouts, sloping shoulders due to their lack of collar bones (clavicles), and short legs. Dr John Bindernagel, a Canadian wildlife biologist who pursued an interest in the possible existence of s*asquatch*, concludes that regular misidentifications are unlikely, especially in the case of daytime sightings lasting more than one or two seconds. He notes that, unfortunately, most field guides do not provide information that would help an eyewitness identify their sighting as a *sasquatch* (Fig 5.2):

> As a result, most wildlife biologists continue to insist on misidentified bears as the most likely explanation for *sasquatch* reports despite its unbear-like appearance. The continued absence of the *sasquatch* from current mammal field guides constitutes an authoritative statement against the existence of this species in North America (Bindernagel 2004, 56).

The Evidence of Footprints

As with the *yeti*, there are footprints attributed to *sasquatch* that would seem to clearly attest to the physicality of the species: its dimensions, gait, range and behaviour. Even renowned primatologist John Napier, based on a narrow sample of alleged *sasquatch* footprints and, at that time, rather limited available empirical analyses of hominoid footprints, concluded that the footprint evidence affirmed the existence of *sasquatch*. In his conclusion he states, 'I am convinced that

2 The *Relict Hominoid Inquiry* (RHI) is a refereed online scholarly journal, since 2012 (www.isu.edu/rhi).

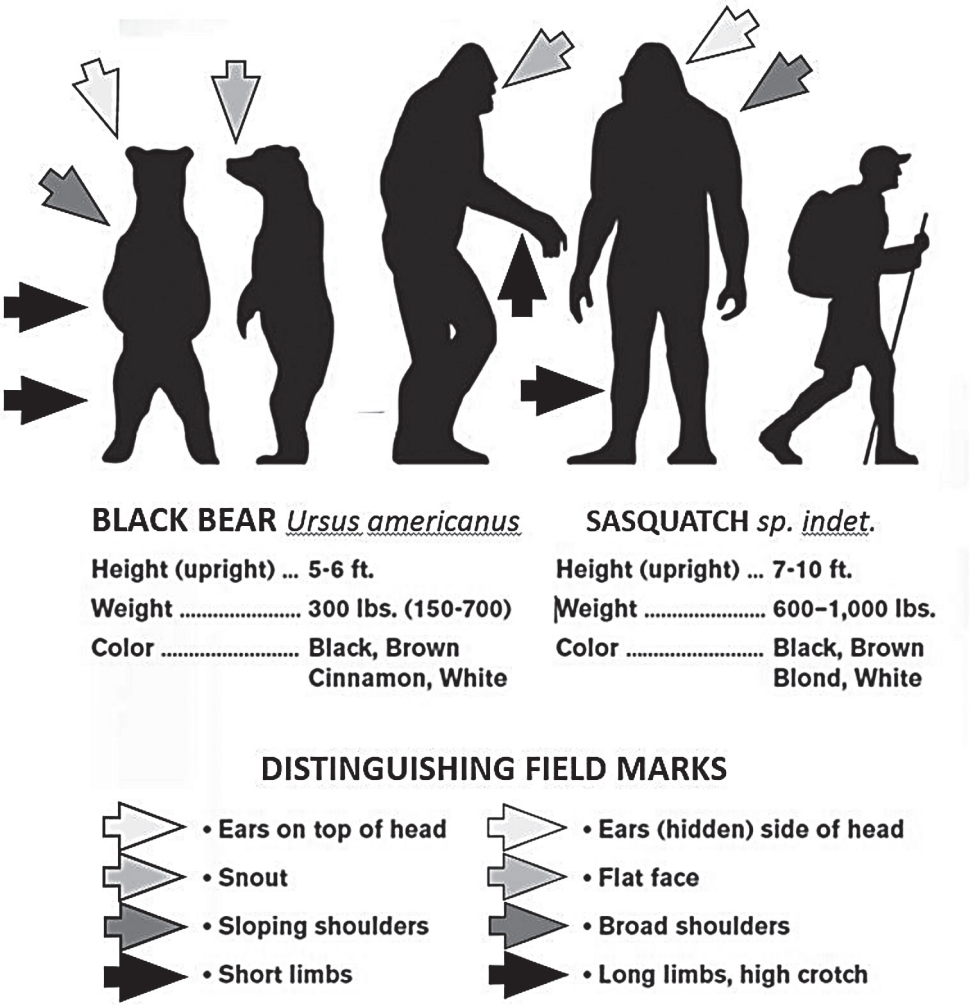

Figure 5.2. The distinguishing features, or field marks, differentiating a sasquatch from a black bear, as well as a human hiker (Meldrum 2013).

the Sasquatch exists, but whether it is all that it is cracked up to be is another matter altogether. There must be *something* in northwest America that needs explaining, and that something leaves man-like footprints. The evidence I have adduced in favor of the Sasquatch is not hard evidence; few physicists, biologists or chemists would accept it, but nevertheless it is evidence and cannot be ignored' (Napier 1973, 205). Unfortunately, it *has* remained ignored or off-handedly dismissed by science, despite the fact that the sample of documented footprints now numbers in the several hundreds and has been the focus of numerous published studies (eg Bindernagel 1998, Krantz 1999, Meldrum 2004, 2006, 2007).

What is the potential for mistaking known wildlife signs as alleged *sasquatch* tracks? A review of a typical field guide to animal tracks and signs once again confirms the bear as the most likely candidate for misidentification. However, only very exceptional guides offer assistance with alleged *sasquatch* footprints (Fig 5.3). While many fleet-footed animals walk and run on a reduced number of toes in a digitigrade or unguligrade fashion, such as the wolf or deer, the hind foot of the bear resembles a human's pedal appendage in its flat-footed, or plantigrade, appearance and its primitive retention of all five distinct toes that make contact with the ground. The bear's toes are arranged essentially in an uneven arc across the end of the foot, with the inner or medial toe being the smallest, and often leaving an indistinct impression. In contrast, the *sasquatch* toes are more or less aligned in an oblique toe row, with the inner or 'big' toe the largest and often the longest. Hominoids have broad flattened nails rather than the recurved claws of a bear. Seasonally, however, bear claws may be worn down from digging in the soil, to the point that they may leave little trace in a footprint, even in soft soil.

Another distinguishing feature of the bear track is the shape of the heel. The heel pad of the bear is tapered to a blunt point and is usually separated from the interdigital pad by a prominent crease. The heel tapers because the bear paw is not completely plantigrade, or flat-footed. Instead, the heel is actually elevated slightly, producing the taper of the underlying pad. In heavy mature bears the heel is pressed to the ground and the pad may be more filled out and rounded. As in most quadrupeds, a greater portion of bodyweight is differentially carried over the bear's

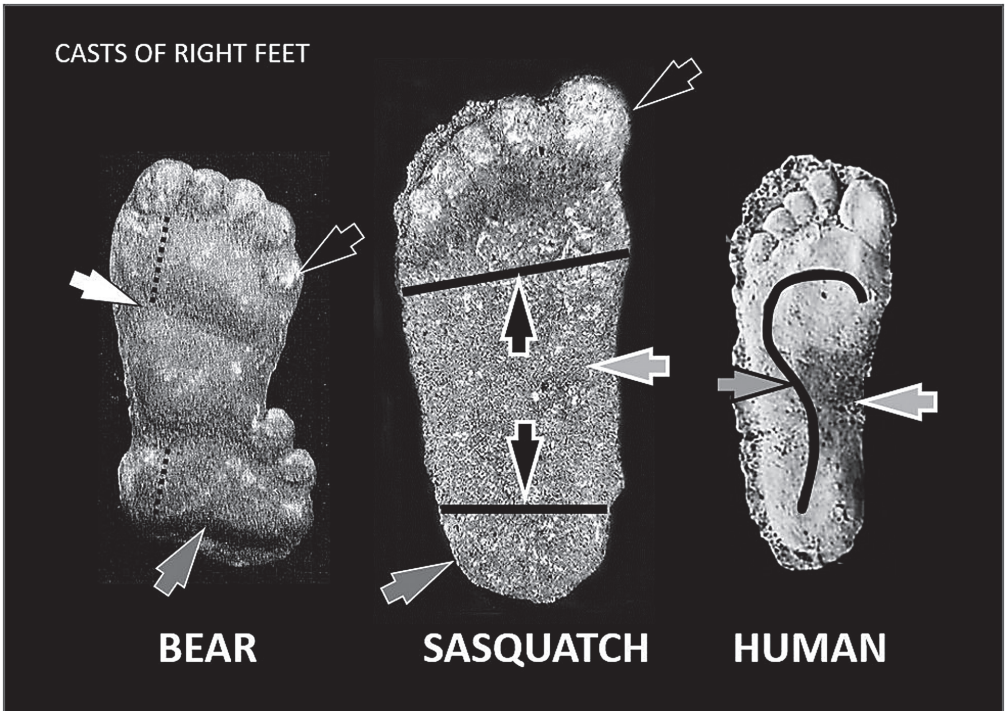

Figure 5.3. Distinguishing features differentiating the footprint attributed to sasquatch from the overlapping fore and hind paw prints of a bear (Meldrum 2013).

forelimbs so that the imprints of the forepaws are generally deeper. In contrast, the habitually bipedal *sasquatch* has a true plantigrade foot, and given its large size, has a broader rounder heel pad to cushion that point of weight-bearing beneath the calcaneus, or heel bone.

The pattern and spacing of footfalls also distinguish reputed *sasquatch* tracks from bear tracks. Generally, the four-legged or quadrupedal pattern of the bear track is evident in the series of alternating fore and hind paws. At normal walking speeds, the paws are well separated and the interval between right and left paws, or straddle, is pronounced. The bear's forepaw lacks a hinter pad and merely has a wedge-shaped interdigital pad. It is noticeably concave on its proximal border, giving it a bean-shaped outline, or cashew-shape considering its asymmetry. However, with age this concavity may tend to fill out somewhat. At swifter speeds, the hind foot imprint often oversteps, overlaps, or is directly superimposed upon the forepaw imprint. The latter two circumstances can give the impression of a single elongate footprint. This precise overlap or register of the fore and hind paws happens infrequently and inconsistently, but can give the impression of tracks left by an animal walking on only two legs, although with a very short step length.

One clue to distinguish such an overlapping track is to look at the shape of the heel. If the overlapping forepaw occupies the position of the 'heel' of the elongate footprint, the bean-shaped pad of the forepaw will exhibit a concave trailing edge instead of a rounded convex outline. If the hind paw dominates the hindmost part of the print the characteristic tapering heel of the bear hind paw will be evident. In either case, there will likely be extraneous toes visible, which are lying outside the overlapping prints, or that are not altogether obliterated by the superimposed paw.

In spite of these distinctions, occasionally bear tracks have been attributed to *sasquatch*, generally by persons unfamiliar with wildlife signs, but even occasionally by experienced hunters. Dr Lynn Rogers is of course very familiar with bear tracks as a result of his many years of experience studying bears. He has personally examined casts of alleged *sasquatch* footprints. As he hefted a large exceptionally clear cast from the west coast of Washington that was collected by an on-duty deputy sheriff, he observed, 'A lot of times bear tracks are reported as people tracks [and sometimes *sasquatch* tracks], but I cannot explain this track. I don't know how they would fake it. The big toe compared to the other toes in a human-like pattern is not like a bear at all. I just cannot explain this' (quoted in Meldrum 2006).

There is no question that footprints and upright hairy figures have been and will be occasionally misidentified, but this does not explain the numerous credible sightings by knowledgeable observers and the persistent examples of distinct well-documented footprints. It should be obvious to any experienced tracker or expert in foot morphology that all footprints attributed to *sasquatch* cannot be casually dismissed as bear footprints, nor, in particular, can or should the observations of experienced outdoorsmen and biologists be brushed aside as simply cases of misidentification, or for that matter, as hoaxes.

What is to be made of these purportedly unattributable footprints? They constitute the most pervasive, compelling body of data indicating the existence of an as-yet-unrecognized (hardly unknown) species of hominoids – *relict hominoids* – persisting in various quarters of the globe. After all, *something* is leaving these footprints. From stone to plaster to digital cameras, these enigmatic giant humanoid footprints have been recorded in Native American petroglyphs, and cast and photographed by roadbuilders, wildlife biologists, law enforcement officers and citizen scientists. For decades, a sample has accumulated revealing a remarkable record, not of merely enlarged facsimiles of human feet, nor misapprehended bear tracks, but of consistent footprints of a large bipedal hominoid evolved and adapted to rough and steep terrain (Meldrum 2004,

2007). In the absence of a type specimen of the trackmaker, a name has been attached to the footprints – an ichnotaxon (Fig 5.4, 5.5). The nomen is *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis*[3] (Meldrum 2007). Most significantly, this recognition affords the establishment of a description and diagnosis of the distinguishing characteristics of these footprints, differentiating them from bear, human and other hominoids.

Figure 5.4. The right and left footprint casts taken by Roger Patterson at the Bluff Creek California film site on October 20, 1967, constituting the type specimens of the ichnotaxon *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis* (Meldrum 2007).

Herein I have concentrated on the footprint evidence raising the possible existence of *sasquatch* and perhaps other species of relict hominoids, such as the *yeti*. Space does not permit a comprehensive discussion of the other forms of evidence – hair, DNA, bioacoustic data, photographic and ethnographic evidence as well as eyewitness accounts. Nor are we afforded an examination and weighing of the expert evaluation and commentary accumulating in the literature, often in the face of considerable sceptical pushback. The original proposed inclusion of a chapter on *sasquatch* in this volume acknowledges the inclination by many, intentional or otherwise, to account for, rationalise and *dismiss* all prospects of relict hominoids as merely a collection of bear misidentifications, hoaxes or folklore. However, addressing this topic in this vein affords an opportunity to address and perhaps assuage this dismissive attitude. Naturally, there are bound to be cases of misidentification, when inexperienced or less critical witnesses ascribe a particular flash of dark fur in the bush to a *sasquatch*, or assume a specific plantigrade pentadactyl footprint could be attributed to a relict hominoid. But to imply that *all* sightings and *all* footprints can be dismissed as encounters with bears (or outright hoaxes), simply because *sasquatch* is assumed, *a priori*, not to exist is hardly reasonable, and in no way *scientific* (Bindernagel 2010). In spite of repeated caveats about the unreliability of eyewitness testimony, many qualified and experienced observers have had otherwise inexplicable experiences with a consistent phenomenon that has a remarkably sensible ecogeographic and anthropologic context. These experiences are corroborated by the documentation of a footprint record that differentiates it consistently and convincingly as a bipedal hominoid, in a biomechanically sound fashion, from other forms of common wildlife (Meldrum 2004). The existence of *sasquatch* and other Wildmen, or relict hominoids, can by no rational means be considered *impossible*. Indeed, it is quite *probable* when considering the increasingly bushy nature of the hominoid family tree and recognizing that several of its branches represent lineages that have persisted alongside *Homo sapiens* until the very recent past – perhaps even to the present (Meldrum 2012a, b).

3 *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis* = North American ape foot.

Figure 5.5. Ten casts by Bob Titmus at Bluff Creek California film site, taken approximately 10 days after the film was captured by Patterson and Gimlin, which constitute the referred material to the ichnotaxon *Anthropoidipes ameriborealis* (Meldrum 2007).

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